



The President's Daily Brief

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12 October 1973

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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The current situation in the Middle East is discussed on *Page 1*.

Lon Nol and Sirik Matak want In Tam to remain on High Political Council; President plans to appoint little known bureaucrat as Prime Minister. (*Page 3*)

Tensions running high in Bangkok over student arrests and it may be difficult to find way to defuse the situation without appearing to have capitulated. (*Page 4*)

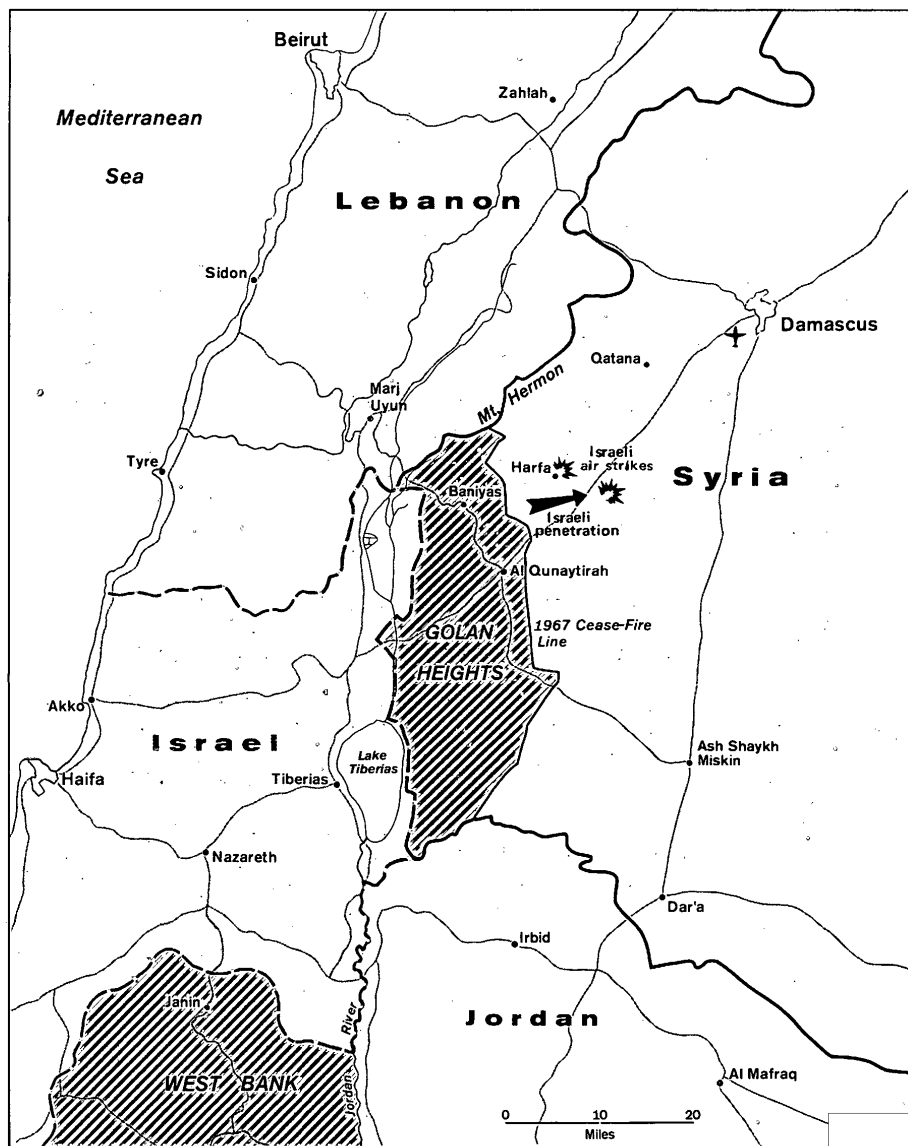
Peron's inauguration in Argentina today will be austere, setting tone for an attempt to solve serious political and economic problems. (*Page 5*)

Chinese to participate in airlift of Pathet Lao personnel from Communist-controlled areas to principal Lao Government centers. (*Page 6*)

Notes on the International Monetary Situation, Uganda, Soviet satellite reconnaissance of the Middle East,

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL

Ground fighting on the Syrian front subsided at nightfall; the Israelis are probably trying to consolidate advances made during the day. The point of deepest penetration is believed to be only about six miles beyond the 1967 cease-fire line between Mount Hermon and Qunaytirah. Israeli aircraft continued to pound Syrian Army positions through the night, particularly on the flanks of the most advanced units. Late last evening, Tel Aviv [redacted] characterized the Israeli position in the Golan Heights as a "partial" breakthrough with several options open to them when action resumes at daybreak. It is not clear whether Israeli units will push toward Damascus and engage Syrian and Iraq forces between them and the capital, or whether the Israelis will instead turn southward to strike at the remaining Syrian units in the Golan Heights area. General Herzog, the Israeli military spokesman, said today that their target will more likely be Qatana, "a bristling military center" 12 miles south of Damascus.

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[redacted] The Syrians probably still have a viable military force remaining along the cease-fire line and it does not seem likely that the Israelis will launch an early drive up the Damascus road leaving these units intact along the Israeli flanks.

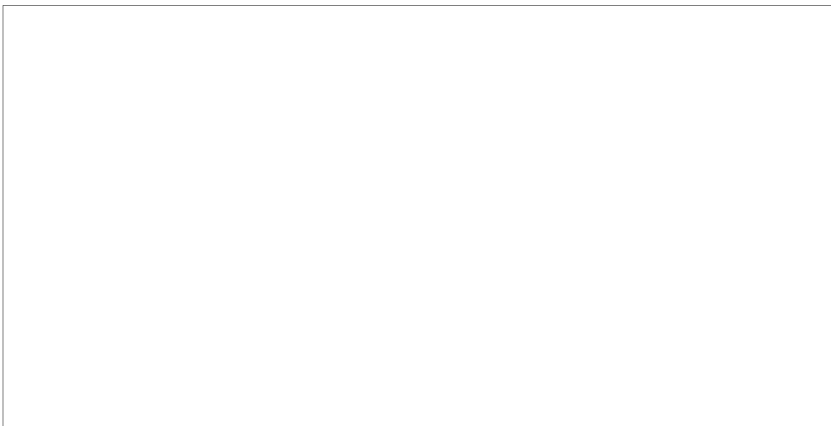
[redacted] Israeli aircraft operating over Syria today encountered more SA-6 surface-to-air missiles than yesterday. This lends credence to speculation that a major purpose of the ongoing Soviet airlift has been to resupply the Arabs with air defense missiles.

The situation on the east bank has not changed appreciably in the past few days. The Egyptians have not expanded their positions on the east bank nor have they launched a major drive toward the Sinai passes. Israeli forces opposite the main concentrations appear to be awaiting Egyptian moves before initiating counterattacks. The Israeli Air Force continues to attack Egyptian positions and some 120 sorties were flown today. The Egyptian Air Force did not attempt to engage the attackers, but ground fire continued to take a toll, downing several aircraft yesterday.

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Baghdad has officially acknowledged the first Iraqi combat losses in the conflict. According to an Iraqi General Staff Headquarters statement, 12 Iraqi aircraft have been shot down over the Syrian front since last Saturday with six pilots killed. Although the Iraqis have theoretically committed their entire armed forces to the Arab cause, it is believed that only about 16,000 men, 100 tanks, and a few squadrons of aircraft have actually been dispatched to Syria.



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A Soviet merchant vessel was reportedly struck by two rockets in the Syrian port of Tartus yesterday. It has settled in shallow water and apparently been abandoned.

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CAMBODIA

Chargé Enders reports that President Lon Nol and Sirik Matak are opposed to In Tam's remaining as prime minister. They want In Tam to remain on the High Political Council, however, and will make him a major general as an enticement. Meanwhile, agreement is emerging between the President and Matak on the shape of a new government which Lon Nol wants to set up as soon as possible. The President plans to designate Hou Hong as the new prime minister. Hong is a little-known bureaucrat with a reputation as a skilled administrator and coordinator. Politically, he is a nonentity. He was probably picked because Lon Nol has had trouble finding an acceptable replacement for In Tam, and because he apparently desires to make the prime ministership an unimportant post.

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Lon Nol reportedly is also planning to divide the ministerial portfolios among four vice prime ministers; all of them are experienced and generally capable officials. If they agree to accept their allotted roles, a more efficient government could result--provided Lon Nol gives them sufficient freedom of action.

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THAILAND

Prominent Thai citizens, student circles, and the press, are reacting critically to the arrest of several student activists. Tensions are high on campuses in Bangkok, and at least one mass demonstration has been held to demand the students' release. The US Embassy reports students moving into Bangkok in large numbers and the protesters are said to total 35,000.

Both Deputy Prime Minister Praphat, who personally ordered the arrests, and Prime Minister Thanom claim that the police have uncovered documents indicating that the students were part of a Communist-inspired plot to overthrow the government. [REDACTED]

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Efforts are now under way to calm the volatile situation. The King has urged Thanom and Praphat to go easy on the students, and the latter has already met with student leaders in an apparent effort to carry out the King's wishes. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Praphat turned down demands that the students be released. With tempers running high it will be more difficult for the government to find a formula for defusing the situation without appearing to have capitulated.

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ARGENTINA

The austere ceremony scheduled for Juan Peron's inauguration today will set the tone for an intense government effort to resolve the country's serious economic and political problems. Although strict security measures will be in effect, terrorists may try to mar the inaugural with some dramatic act of violence.

Bitter conflicts between left and right wing factions in the Peronist movement and the increase in terrorism by extreme leftists will absorb Peron's immediate attention. Peron is unlikely to make any major administrative changes until he obtains a first-hand assessment of the government team he will inherit.

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CHINA-LAOS

The Chinese will participate in an airlift of Pathet Lao personnel from the Communist-controlled areas to principal Lao Government centers. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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Peking hopes to demonstrate that it intends to play a constructive role in post-war Laos. China supported efforts to end the fighting and to find a political settlement in Laos, and presumably worked behind the scenes to help compose differences during the last year or so of hostilities. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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NOTES

International Monetary Situation: The dollar weakened slightly on major foreign exchange markets this week, and the price of gold was pushed back above \$100 an ounce. Pressure on the dollar and the rise in the gold price are primarily attributable to increased anxiety over the possibility of prolonged Middle East hostilities and the associated threat to oil supplies.

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Uganda: President Amin warned US chargé Keeley yesterday that if the US becomes involved in the Middle East war, he will break relations and imprison all 276 private and official Americans in Uganda until the US withdraws. Amin was undeterred by Keeley's assurances that Sixth Fleet movements were designed only to protect US citizens in the areas of conflict. Amin's threats may be sheer bluster but he does seem to be in one of his periodic irrational moods. He did not make clear what would constitute US involvement in the Middle East fighting.

USSR: Soviet satellite reconnaissance of the Middle East has increased during the current crisis. Two high resolution photoreconnaissance satellites currently are in orbit. One of these, which will provide optimum coverage of the Middle East, apparently will be brought down this morning, only six days after it was launched. A low resolution satellite was brought down early on October 9 after completing one half of its normal 12-day mission. Soviet Elint satellite monitoring of the Middle East has also been at a high level since October 4.

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